

# Period problems—Periods

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**If problems with your periods are affecting your life, there's help and support available.**

Before you see your GP about period problems, it can be useful to keep a diary of your symptoms throughout the menstrual cycle. This can give your doctor a detailed idea of what happens, and when, during your cycle.

## Painful periods

Pain during periods is common. It's usually caused by the womb contracting to push out the blood.

Exercise may help relieve the pain, as well as taking over-the-counter painkillers, such as [paracetamol](#), [ibuprofen](#) and [aspirin](#).

However, do not take ibuprofen or aspirin if you have asthma or stomach, heart, kidney or liver problems. Aspirin should not be taken by anyone under 16 years of age.

Hormonal contraception (such as the [combined contraceptive pill](#), the [intrauterine system \(IUS\)](#), the [contraceptive patch](#) or the [contraceptive injection](#)) can reduce period pain.

See your GP if the pain is so severe that it affects your daily life.

Read more about [period pain](#).

## Heavy periods

Some women naturally have heavier periods than others, but if your periods are so heavy that they impact your life, there is help available.

Talk to your GP about your bleeding, including how often you have to change your sanitary protection (towels, tampons, period underwear or menstrual cup).

Your GP can investigate why you're experiencing heavy bleeding. These investigations may include a physical examination, blood tests or scans.

Treatments for heavy periods can include:

- some types of hormonal contraception, such as the [intrauterine system \(IUS\)](#) or the [combined contraceptive pill](#)
- [tranexamic acid tablets](#)

- anti-inflammatory painkillers, such as ibuprofen or mefenamic acid
- progestogen tablets
- surgery (depending on the cause)

Read more about [heavy periods](#), including treatment.

## Irregular periods

A period usually lasts 2 to 7 days, with the average period lasting 5 days.

The length of the menstrual cycle varies from woman to woman, but the average is to have periods every 28 days. Regular cycles that are longer or shorter than this, from 23 to 35 days, are normal.

But some women have an irregular menstrual cycle.

This is where there is a wide variation in:

- the time between your periods (they may arrive early or late)
- the amount of blood you lose (periods may be heavy or light)
- the number of days the period lasts

Irregular periods can be common during puberty and just before the [menopause](#).

Changing your method of contraception can also disturb your normal menstrual cycle.

Read more about [irregular periods](#), including what causes them and when treatment may be necessary.

## Stopped or missed periods

There are many reasons why you may miss your period, or why periods may stop altogether.

Some common reasons are:

- pregnancy
- stress
- sudden weight loss
- overexercising
- reaching the menopause

If your periods stop and you're concerned, see your GP.

Read more about [stopped or missed periods](#).

## PMS (premenstrual syndrome)

PMS is thought to be linked to changing levels of hormones throughout the menstrual cycle.

Not all women get PMS. If you do, the range and severity of symptoms can vary.

Symptoms may include:

- mood swings
- feeling depressed or irritable
- headaches
- tiredness
- bloating
- breast tenderness

Symptoms usually start and can intensify in the 2 weeks before your period, and then ease and disappear after your period starts.

Read more about [PMS](#), including symptoms and treatment.

## Endometriosis

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the lining of the womb (endometrium) grows in other places outside the womb, such as in the ovaries and fallopian tubes.

Not all women have symptoms, but endometriosis can cause:

- painful, heavy or irregular periods
- pelvic pain
- pain during or after sex
- pain or discomfort when going to the toilet
- blood in your pee

See your GP if you have symptoms of endometriosis, especially if they're having a big impact on your life.

Read more about [endometriosis](#), including how it's diagnosed and treated.

## Ovulation pain

Some women get a one-sided pain in their lower abdomen when they ovulate.

The pain can be a dull cramp or sharp and sudden. It can last just a few minutes or continue for 1 to 2 days. Some women notice a little vaginal bleeding when it happens.

Painful ovulation can usually be eased by simple remedies like soaking in a hot bath or taking an over-the-counter painkiller, such as [paracetamol](#).

If you're in a lot of discomfort, see your GP about other treatment options.